

Rurouni Kenshin



SHONEN JUMP GRAPHIC NOVEL

Story & Art by

Nobuhiro Watsuki

volume

4



和月伸宏

NOBUHIRO WATSUKI

WATSUKI LIES FOR THE THIRD TIME!

I AM SO, SO SORRY. THE PROMISE MADE TO YOU IN VOLUME 2 HAS BEEN FORSAKEN. WATSUKI IS A BAD, BAD MAN (YOU MAY STONE ME, IF YOU WISH). WHAT I SHOULD DO IS, DO LIKE YOU SEE ABOVE AND COMMIT SEPPUKU, BUT NOT BEFORE FINISHING RUROKEN AND NOT BEFORE FINISHING SHIN (NEW) SAMURAI SPIRITS. INSTEAD I'LL SUCK IT UP, TIGHTEN THE KNOT ON MY HACHIMAKI, AND RESOLVE TO DO MY BEST. PLEASE DON'T ABANDON ME...PLEASE....

Rurouni Kenshin, which has found fans not only in Japan but around the world, first made its appearance in 1992, as an original short story in **Weekly Shonen Jump Special**. Later rewritten and published as a regular, continuing **Jump** series in 1994, **RUROUNI KENSHIN** ended serialization in 1999 but continued in popularity, as evidenced by the 2000 publication of **Yahiko no Sakabatô** ("Yahiko's Reversed-Edge Sword") in **Weekly Shonen Jump**. His most current work, **Buso-renkin** ("Armored Alchemist"), began publication this June, also in **Jump**.



RUROUNI KENSHIN
VOL. 4: DUAL CONCLUSIONS
The SHONEN JUMP Graphic Novel Edition

STORY AND ART BY
NOBUHIRO WATSUKI

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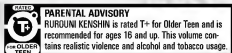
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SHONEN JUMP GRAPHIC NOVEL

Rurouni Kenshin™

MEIJI SWORDSMAN ROMANTIC STORY Vol. 4: DUAL CONCLUSIONS

STORY AND ART BY
NOBUHIRO WATSUKI



Mimura Kenshin, once known as "**Mimura Battōsai**"--a *hitokiri* legendary among the pro-Imperialist patriots who fought to create the Meiji Era. Now a guest of the Kamiya dojo, former assassin Kenshin carries only a *sakabatō*, a reversed-edge sword, to prohibit himself from taking life, ever again.



T H U S F A R

Recently, Kenishin saved Takami Megumi from the private army of grasping young industrialist Takeda Kanryū. Megumi, daughter of the Takami family of Aizu honored for its achievements in medicine, was separated from her family during the Aizu War and came to Tokyo as assistant to a doctor. That doctor, however, was working with Kanryū to sell a new form of opium, and Megumi began unknowingly to become involved upon the doctor's death by Kanryū. Megumi was forced to continue producing the new opium (perhaps not accidentally) being the only one familiar with its production.

After an escape from Kanryū, Megumi was to have stayed with Kenshin and the others at the Kamiya dojo. Instead, she disappears, leaving only a letter stating that she's returning to Aizu. The truth, though, is that Kanryū—who's since discovered Kenshin's past—has threatened her in order to avoid a confrontation with the legendary *hitokiri*. Sensing that Megumi has for her own reasons returned to Kanryū, Kenshin heads out with Yahiko and Sanosuke to rescue her. His private army annihilated, Kanryū tries to buy off Kenshin, but the *pururoi* wants no part of it. That's good news to Aoshi—head of Kanryū's elite force, the Oniwabanshū—as a fight with Kenshin is what the battle-loving Aoshi would like most of all. Now in Kanryū Manor, Han'nyū, the first of the Oniwabanshū, appears....

緋村剣心

（人斬り拔刀齋）



明神みんしん 弥彦やひこ



神谷 薫



高荷恵



相樂左之助



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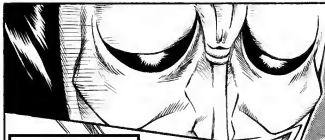
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I AM
HAN'NYA, MASTER
OF INTELLIGENCE
OF THE EDO
CASTLE
ONIWABANSHŪ.

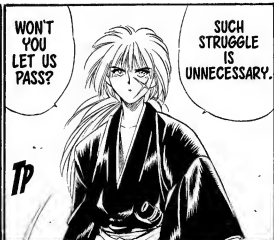
**Act
23**

**The
Martial-
Artist
and the
Spy**



BY
ORDER OF THE
OKASHIRA, I
WILL DEFEND
THIS SPOT TO
THE DEATH!

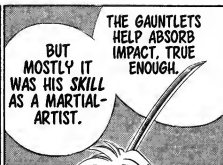
和伸
月宏



KANKEE ELEN



◀ READ THIS WAY ▶



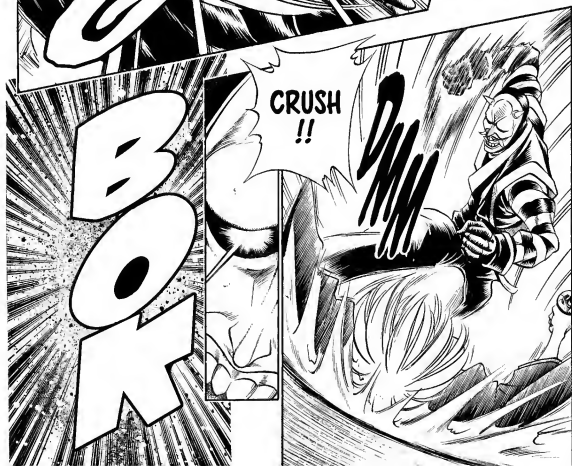


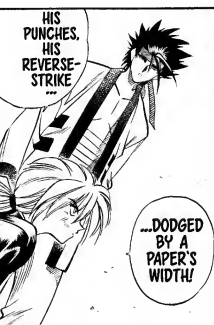


REVERSE-
STRIKE!



DIRECT
HIT!?









YOU
HAD NO
IDEA.

A WEEK
AGO, WHEN
YOU FIRST
SET EYES
ON ME...

...YOU
BEGAN TO
FALL UNDER
MY SPELL.

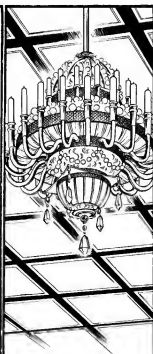
HIS
OPPONENTS
HAVE NO
CHANCE
UNLESS
THEY CAN
SEE THROUGH
THE TRICK.



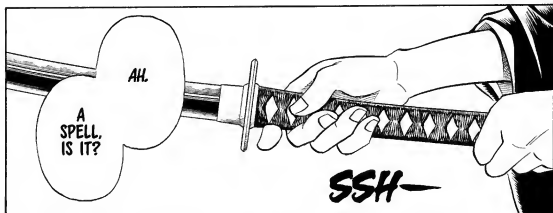
IF HIS
COMBAT
SKILLS
ARE NOT
ENOUGH

...HIS
UNDEFEATABLE
"ARM-EXTENSION
SPELL" SHOULD
BE.

HAN'NYA
IS
TOUGH.

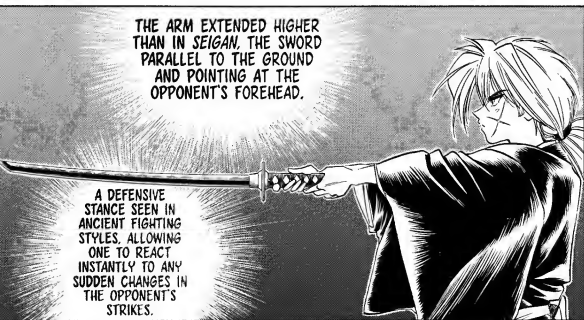


THEY'VE
BEGUN,
IT
SEEMS.





*BASIC FORMS: JÖDAN, CHÜDAN (SEIGAN), GEDAN, HASSÖ, WAKIGAMAE [SEE GLOSSARY-ED.]





DON'T
TELL ME
YOU
SHRINK
FROM
THIS!?



AS A
DEFENSIVE
FORM, IT
MAKES THE
TRANSITION
TO THE
OFFENSIVE
DIFFICULT!!

HYAH!

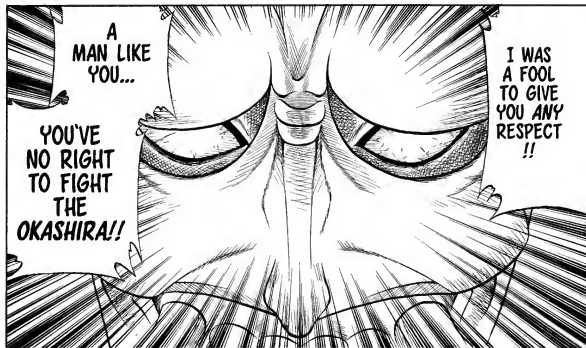


ANSWER
ME!!



...OF THE
LEGENDARY
HITOKIRI!?

IS THIS
THE TRUE
FACE...



A
MAN LIKE
YOU...

YOU'VE
NO RIGHT
TO FIGHT
THE
OKASHIRA!!

I WAS
A FOOL
TO GIVE
YOU ANY
RESPECT
!!



...WHERE
YOU
STAND!!

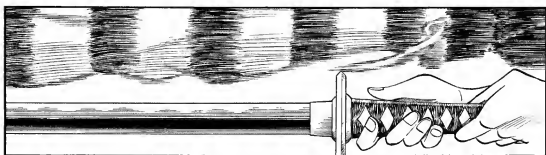
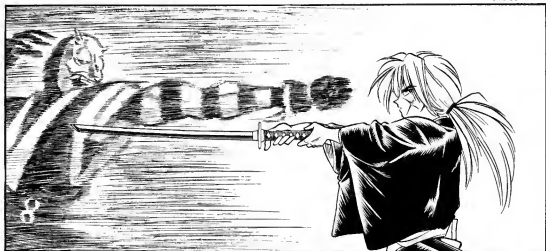
YOU
DIE...



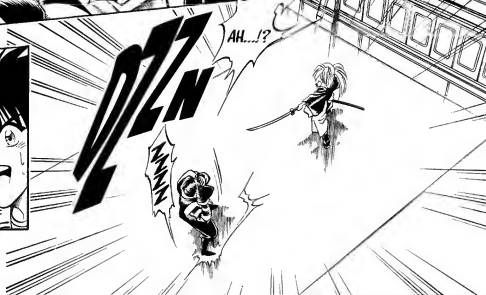
NO MATTER
HOW STRONG
A DEFENSE
"SHINKEN"
IS...

...YOU'LL
NEVER
DODGE
THIS...

...NOT
UNLESS
YOU CAN
SEE HOW
MY ARMS
EXTEND!!







AH...!?

A...

A...

G...





YOU HELD
THE SWORD
PARALLEL TO
THE GROUND
TO MEASURE
THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN
PERCEPTION
AND THE REAL
DISTANCE!

YOUR
SHINKEN
WAS NOT
ONLY
DEFENSE!!

《 READ
THIS
WAY 》

...SO...
THEN...

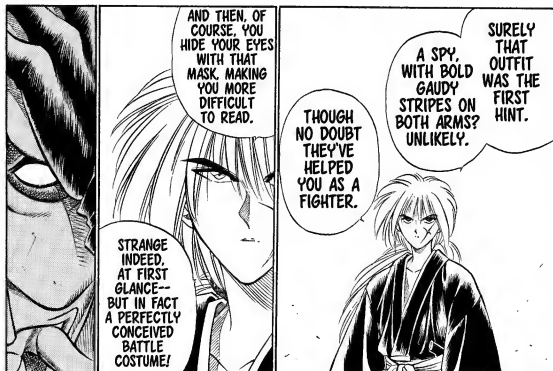


IT'S GOOD
FOR WHEN
THERE'S NO
RULER HANDY.

Gimme
back my
bokutō.

HEH

ONE THING
ANY
SWORDSMAN
KNOWS--THE
LENGTH OF HIS
OWN BLADE!



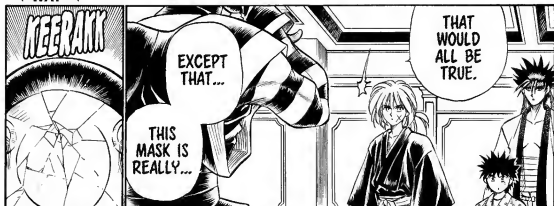
AND THEN, OF
COURSE, YOU
HIDE YOUR EYES
WITH THAT
MASK, MAKING
YOU MORE
DIFFICULT TO
READ.

STRANGE
INDEED,
AT FIRST
GLANCE--
BUT IN FACT
A PERFECTLY
CONCEIVED
BATTLE
COSTUME!

THOUGH
NO DOUBT
THEY'VE
HELPED
YOU AS A
FIGHTER.

SURELY
THAT
OUTFIT
WAS THE
FIRST
HINT.

A SPY,
WITH BOLD
GAUDY
STRIPES ON
BOTH ARMS?
UNLIKELY.



Rurouni Kenshin





Act 24 Savage Han'nya, Honorable Shikijō



仲伸
月宏



Act 24

**Savage Han'nya,
Honorable Shikijō**





I DON'T
KNOW WHERE
YOU COME
FROM...

BUT IN
MY HOME
DISTRICT,
THERE ARE
MANY POOR
VILLAGES.



WHERE I
GREW UP WE
CALLED IT...
"RETURNING
THE CHILD."



EVEN NOW, THE
CUSTOM IS TO
KILL ONE'S OWN
CHILD, TO LESSEN
THE MOUTHS
TO FEED.



IT IS ALL
OVER ONCE
A CHILD
HAS BEEN
RETURNED.

FROM THEN
ON, YOU LIVE
AS AN ANIMAL,
ROAMING LIKE A
CAT, KILLING
LIKE A LONE
WOLF.

I
SURVIVED.
BARELY.
BUT I
CAN'T GO
HOME.



YOU
MEAN...
YOU...



BUT
--!!!

STEEL
CLAWS!!

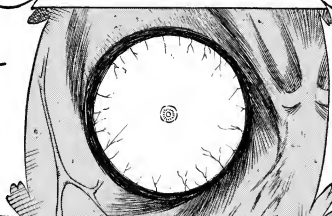


HE TRAINED
ME INTO A
FIRST-CLASS
ONMITSU!!



AOSHI
FOUND
THIS
WOLF--AND
RESCUED
HIM!!

...MY
COMRADES--
AND MY
REASON
TO LIVE!!



HE GAVE
ME THE
EDO CASTLE
ONIWABANSHU
...

IF I CAN
BE OF ANY
USE TO
AOSHI...

...WHAT
NEED HAVE
I FOR A
FACE?!!!

ALL THIS
GUY CARES
FOR IS THE
ONIWABANSHŪ
OKASHIRA!!

THIS
IS
BAD!!

LOOK
OUT,
KENSIN!

HE MAY
AS WELL
BE A
MONSTER!!

THE
PAST OF
MEGUMI-
DONO...

THEN
ANSWER
THIS,
HAN'NYA!

DID
YOU KNOW
OF IT?!

SS

HOW
CAN
YOU
ASK?!

KNOWS
ALL!!

THE
MASTER
SPY OF THE
ONIWABANSHU
...



HIWAH













...AOSHI...

BUT
STILL YOUR
SKILLS...ARE
NOTHING...
COMPARED
TO...



...HAN'NYA.



FINALLY...

HE
WAS A
TOUGH
ONE.

DID YOU
EVER THINK
OF WHAT
MEGUMI-DONO
SUFFERS?

YOU
KNOW FULL
WELL HOW
TERRIBLE
SOLITUDE
CAN BE.





IF
YOU'VE
COME THIS
FAR, YOU'VE
DEFEATED
HAN'NYA.

YOU
MUST BE
GOOD.

T
N
G

Z
O
O
P

!!

TONK!



...SHIKIJŌ.

KEEPER OF THE
CASTLE
GATE,
EDO...



HELLO!!

MY
WAY
TO SAY
HELLO.





YOU
GUYS
KEEP
GOING!

I'M FINE.
LEAVE THE
MUSCLE-
HEAD TO
ME.

SANO!



LET'S
GO,
YAHIKO
!!

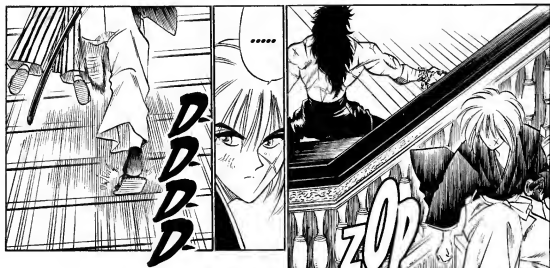
ON
IT!



SANO...



THIS GUY
I CAN HANDLE
EASY. YOU GO
GET THAT DRUG-
PUSHING WENCH
OUT OF
HERE!





...YOU
GLUED-
TOGETHER
PIECE
O'CRAP!!

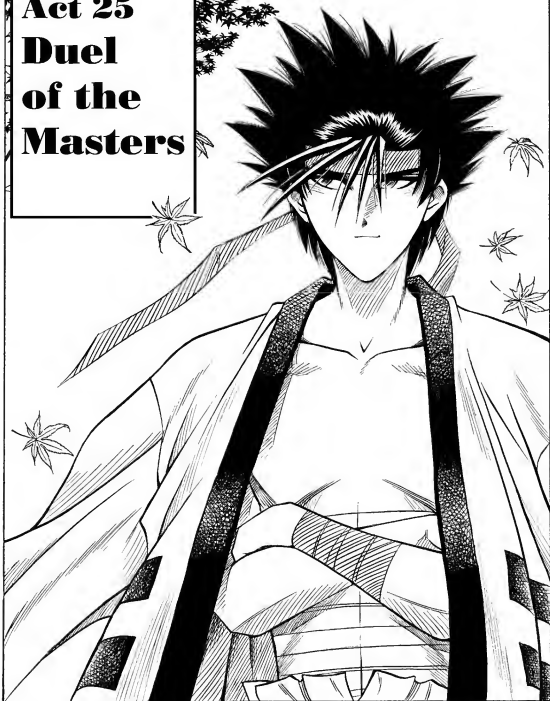
DON'T
YOU UNDER-
ESTIMATE
ME...

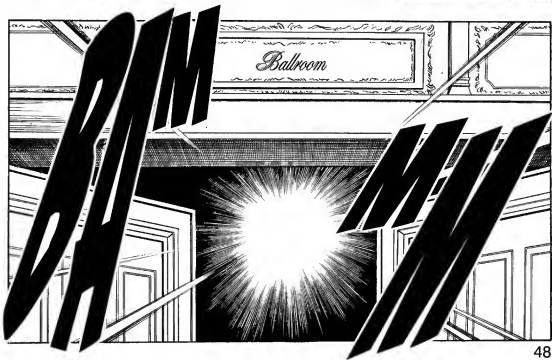
THE ZANBATO'S
GONE, YEAH...
BUT THE TWO
ARMS BEHIND
IT ARE STILL
HERE!

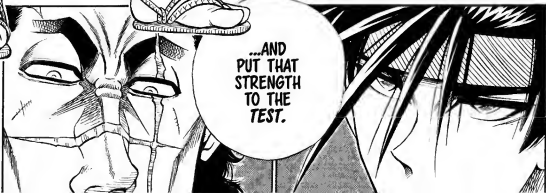
AND
THE ONE
SETTLING
FOR THIRD-
RATE
HERE...

...IS
ME!!

Act 25
Duel
of the
Masters







GOOD
IDEA. LET'S
GO!!

DD-D-DD

ORAH
!!!



NNNG!!!

GYURORON

GH!

WHYKKKKK

TCH.

THE
PIECE
O' CRAP
HAS
MUSCLES
...!!



READ
THIS
WAY

THESE SCARS
ALL OVER MY
BODY...MY
WHOLE LIFE'S
BEEN A
BATTLE.

THE
BODY
KINDA
MOVES
ON ITS
OWN.

DIDN'T
MEAN
THE HEAD
BUTT.

OH.
SORRY.

HEH...

...Y...
YOU...!

BLIP

BLIP

NHN...
NHN...

BLIP

BLIP

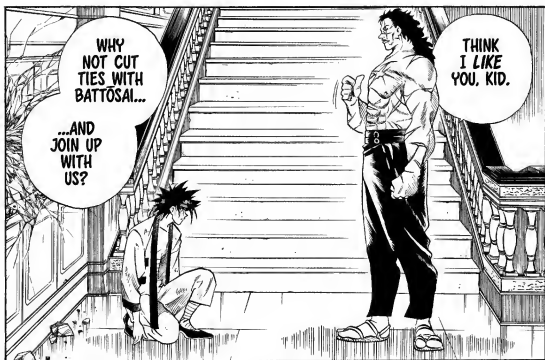
EVEN
SO...

EASY, NOW.
IMPRESSIVE
YOUR SKULL
WASN'T
CRUSHED
BY THE
BLOW...

STILL,
YOU TOOK
SOME
DAMAGE.

BETTER
COUNT ON
BEING WOZZY
FOR A
WHILE YET.

TUK





I WAS
DEFEATED BY
THE OKASHIRA...
WHO WAS ONLY
13 AT THE
TIME!!

IN THE 2ND
YEAR OF KEIŌ,
I INFILTRATED
EDO CASTLE
WITH ORDERS TO
GET INFO FOR
THE UPCOMING
BATTLE.

THE
MEDICINES
OF THE
ONIWABANSHŪ
CAN MAKE THOSE
MUSCLES EVEN
STRONGER.



I DO
HATE TO
WASTE SO
MAGNIFICENT
A PHYSIQUE.

Young Aoshi. Although the design
was initially for a different
character, I tried him out here
and he was a big hit (with women,
at least...). His bangs, though—
man, are they a pain. Man.

和伸 参



JOIN
US...AND
BECOME
UNSTOPPABLE!



SAME
FOR
YOU.

NOT
THERE
YET, BUT
YOU COULD
BE.

AND
HE WAS
TRUE
TO HIS
WORD!!

USE THE
STUFF
THEY
OFFER.
AND BE AS
STRONG
AS
HAN'NYA...
EVEN ME!



THE ONI-
WABANSHŪ
IS STRONG,
NO DOUBT
ABOUT IT.

...IT'D BE THE
OKASHIRA
WHO WAS
THE LEGEND,
NOT
BATTOSAI!

YOU SAID IT!
IF IT HAD
BEEN HIM
IN KYOTO
HUNTING
PATRIOTS...

THIS
SHINOMORI
AOSHI, HE'S
QUITE A
GUY.

IF WHAT
YOU SAY
IS TRUE...

BESHIMI...
HYOTTOKO...
DEADLY
FIGHTERS,
ALL OF
YOU.



...THAT'S
ALL.

STILL...

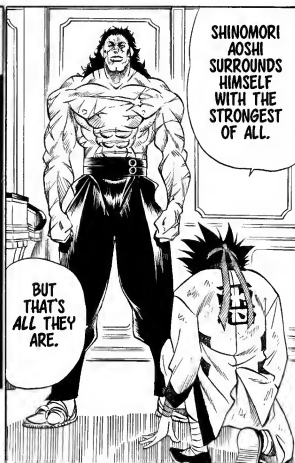


YOU STAY
TOGETHER
BECAUSE
OF IT. THE
FIGHT IS
EVERYTHING.

BUT
HIMURA
KENSHIN
IS
DIFFERENT.



WHAT
...
...DO
YOU...?



SHINOMORI
AOSHI
SURROUNDS
HIMSELF
WITH THE
STRONGEST
OF ALL.

BUT
THAT'S
ALL THEY
ARE.



HE'S
NOT HITOKIRI
ANYMORE,
JUST RUROUNI.

EVEN SO,
WHEN BATTLE
STARTS TO
SWIRL AROUND
HIM...

THEY COME
TOGETHER IN
ADMIRATION
OF HIM.







FOOL...!!

**COMPARED
TO HIMURA
KENSIN,
YOU'RE
NOTHING!!**



**YOU
ONIWABANSHŪ--
YOU DROWN
IN YOUR OWN
STRENGTH,
LOWERING
YOURSELVES
TO BECOME
PAWNS OF
TAKEDA
KANRYŪ!!**



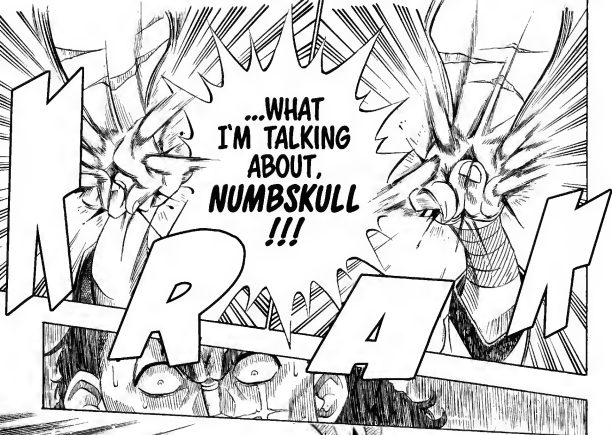
**DROWNING
IN MY OWN
STRENGTH,
AM I?!
AM I??!**

**I GIVE
YOU ONE
COMPLIMENT
AND YOU
THINK YOU
CAN JUDGE
US?!**



**THIS...
IS
JUST...**

**DEFEAT
ME FIRST,
THEN TALK
BIG!!**





UH...
GUH.

YOUR
HEAD'S AS
HARD AS
MINE, BUT
THAT DON'T
MEAN
EITHER
OF 'EM...

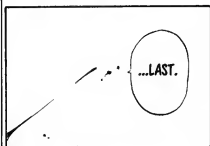
...CAN'T
BE
HURT.

YOU EVER
GET THE
CHANCE,
FACE
KENSHIN.

SHIKIJŌ.

TM







The Secret Life of Characters (10)

—Oniwabanshū • Han'nya—

He's not "Masked Ninja [Akakage]," if that's what you're thinking (LAUGH). Han'nya's forebears are more like the "Elephant Man." Originally, his face was to have been congenitally deformed. Like the Elephant Man, the idea was for him to have been stepped on while still in his mother's body. He would have been treated not as a human being, but as a monster, and would have lived deep in the mountains, in solitude. He'd be discovered by Aoshi, join the Oniwabanshū. He'd be a tragic figure who tells himself, "Only in the Oniwabanshū am I able to live as a human being." Only in battle would he find his *raison d'être*.

When it came to writing all this up, though, my editor and I got into a discussion about how it might be interpreted to mean "the shape of one's life is determined by how one is born." After a long conversation about whether such a message is even appropriate in a young men's magazine (I think it was the longest discussion ever, since the start of *Rurouni*), I came to the conclusion that a change needed to be made. As an author, Han'nya was really a challenging character for me in that I was aware for perhaps the first time of the responsibility of writing for young people.

Personality-wise, he's based on Yamazaki Susumu of the *Shinsengumi*. Many readers proposed that, beneath the mask, he was secretly handsome, or was *kagemusha* for Aoshi (his twin brother, say!), or even *kunoichi* (a female ninja). There were lots of interesting guesses. For whatever reason, the idea of a *kunoichi* being part of the Oniwabanshū never entered my head; I find it interesting. Maybe she'll appear as a new character in the future—not that there are any plans as of yet.

The model in terms of design was nothing more than a skeleton. That the left and right eyes are of different shape and size is a remnant of the original concept. As a side note, Han'nya's outfit became more and more blocky as I drew it, leading my assistants to call it "robot," "mobile suit," you name it.





Act 26

伸
月
和
宏

Shinomori Aoshi, Okashira





WHAT
WAS SAID
TO HAN'NYA
IS NOW
SAID TO
YOU...

HE
DIDN'T,
DID HE?

WHEN YOU
SAID THAT
TO HAN'NYA,
DID HE
LET YOU
PASS?

WILL YOU NOT
LET US PASS
AND TELL US
WHERE KANRYU
AND MEGUMI-
DONO ARE
?

THIS
ONE WOULD
AVOID
BATTLE WHEN
POSSIBLE.



ASK
FOR THEIR
LOCATION
WITH YOUR
SAKABATŌ.

MY
REPLY
SHALL COME
WITH THIS.

THE
LENGTH
OF THE
BLADE...!



THIS ONE
ASKS IT
AS WELL.

HEY!!

IT'S
JUST...
I KNOW.



HAVE
THE CHILD
STAND
BACK.



HOW
ARROGANT
ARE
YOU?!!

YOU
THINK YOU
CAN FIGHT
US WITH
A SINGLE
WAKIZASHI
?!





THE
"SHIELD-SWORD"--
THAT'S HOW
THE KODACHI
IS KNOWN.

ITS
SHORTNESS
PROVIDES LESS
POWER, BUT
LIGHTNESS AND
EASE OF USE
MAKES FOR A
FINE DEFENSE.

TO BE
ON ITS
OTHER
END...

...IS
QUITE A
CHALLENGE.

ALSO, Ō- (LONG) WAKIZASHI, OR NAGA- (LONG) WAKIZASHI

MEANING...
I TAKE THE
OFFENSIVE.

YES.

WH...?

DM



READ THIS WAY

**A
KICK
!?**

2-1525K

IS
THIS
MAN...

**...ALSO A
MARTIAL-
ARTIST?!!**

...LIKE
HAN'NYA...



AH, YOU
USE THE
KODACHI TO
CREATE AN
IMPENETRA-
BLE GUARD
...

...THEN
ATTACK
WITH
MARTIAL-
ARTS LIKE
HAN'NYA.



I FIGHT
NOT LIKE
HAN'NYA,
BUT HE
LIKE ME.

YOU
MAKE
ONE
MISTAKE.



DM



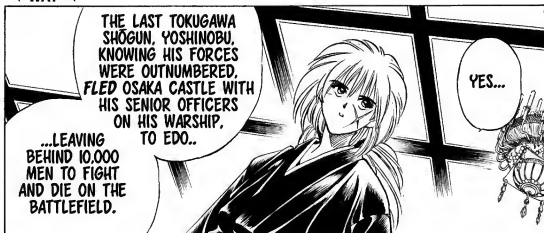
A
MISTAKE
TO THINK
THEM THE
SAME.

Wobble

HIS BLOWS
CANNOT
COMPARE
TO HIS
MASTER'S.

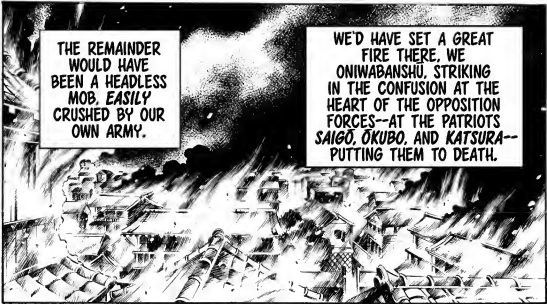
TM





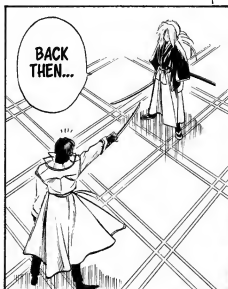


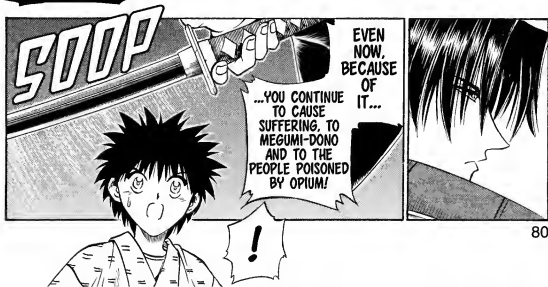
...IF WE
HAD FOUGHT
AT EDO...THE
ISHIN SHISHI
VICTORY WOULD
HAVE BEEN
OURS.



THE REMAINDER
WOULD HAVE
BEEN A HEADLESS
MOB. EASILY
CRUSHED BY OUR
OWN ARMY.

WE'D HAVE SET A GREAT
FIRE THERE, WE
ONIWABANSHU, STRIKING
IN THE CONFUSION AT THE
HEART OF THE OPPOSITION
FORCES--AT THE PATRIOTS
SAIGŌ, ŌKUBO, AND KATSURA--
PUTTING THEM TO DEATH.







--THIS
ONE WILL
NOT STAND
IDLY BY!!

AN
ISHIN
SHISHI--
OR EVEN
RUROUNI--

ZAN



COME.

SAY
WHAT
YOU
WILL.
SINCERE
OR NOT,
YOU'VE NO
CHANCE
TO WIN.



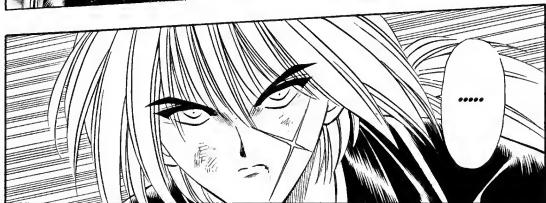




BUT MY
KODACHI
IS NOT SO
FLIMSY AS
TO BE
DEFEATED
BY THAT.

THE "RYÜTSUSEN"
OF THE "HITEN
MITSURUGI"
SCHOOL,
FOLLOWED BY
BATTÔJUTSU--
WITHOUT
WAITING
TO LAND.

QUITE
AN
ATTACK.





THAT MAN,
A MERE
HIRELING,
HAS
INSULTED
ME!!

BAM

DAMN
HIM!!

IF ANYTHING
GOES WRONG--
HE COULD
TURN ON ME!!

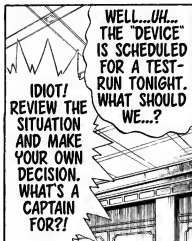


AT LEAST...NOW I KNOW!
HE'S JUST LIKE BATTOSAI,
HE CAN'T BE BOUGHT
WITH MONEY. AND HE
LOVES FIGHTING, TO
THE POINT OF *INSANITY*.

THINK, KANRYŪ. IF
IT CAN BE DONE,
YOUR LIFE IS A
BED OF ROSE
PETALS...



BATTOSAI AND
AOSHI...THERE
MUST BE A WAY
TO RID MYSELF
OF THEM BOTH.



IDIOT!
REVIEW THE
SITUATION
AND MAKE
YOUR OWN
DECISION.
WHAT'S A
CAPTAIN
FOR?!

WELL...UH...
THE "DEVICE"
IS SCHEDULED
FOR A TEST-
RUN TONIGHT.
WHAT SHOULD
WE...?



UMM...
KANRYŪ-
SAN?

KREE

WHAT!?!
WHAT
DO YOU
WANT?!

READ
THIS WAY



The Secret Life of Characters (11)

—Oniwabanshū • Shikijō—

Shikijō's model is Sanosuke. Shocking to hear, perhaps, but true. His personality, then, is similar (cocksure and proud, but also generous), as is his fighting style (powerful), as well as philosophy (supportive of his "number one"). By putting them on opposite sides and having them fight, Shikijō and Sanosuke clearly embody the differences between the two sides. That was the idea behind the fight (which may or may not have worked, but...).

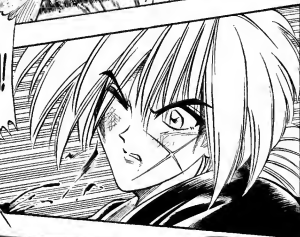
Han'ya wasn't a character you could describe as "evil," but even though Shikijō was setup as the complete villain, it was perhaps the noble manner of his death that transformed him into a pretty cool guy. He does have an enthusiastic group of fans...but, then again, so do all the Oniwabanshū. For this volume, though, the best response was for the young Aoshi. I guess what matters most in a man is his face (PAINED LAUGH).

For his design, there was no specific model. Since he's a "power fighter," I made him all muscles—but that didn't really make him strange-enough looking—so I also gave him scars all over, along with superhero-like exaggerated musculature.





KENSHIN!



MY
KODACHI
WILL BLOCK
EVEN THE
BULLETS FROM
RIFLES.

HIT ME
ALL YOU
LIKE, IT'S
NO USE.

Act 27 Battle's Heat

Act 27

Battle's Heat

和伸
月宏





...EVEN WHEN HE'S
WINNING, HE SHOWS
NO EMOTION. THE "ICE-
COLD BLOOD OF WAR..."



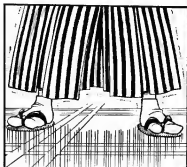
GET
UP.

HE'S
GOOD...
EVEN
KENSIN
AS HE IS
CAN'T LAND
A BLOW
ON HIM.



ALSO...

I'D
RATHER
NOT FINISH
SOMEONE
WHEN
THEY'RE
DOWN.



KENSHIN
!!

RRG...
MY LEGS
ARE
FROZEN...

NEVER
MIND WHAT
SANO WOULD
SAY.

HOW
COULD
I EVER
FACE KAORU-
DONO?

TO
LOSE NOW...
WHAT WOULD
MEGUMI-
DONO THINK?

WOW

NO
NEED
FOR
WORRY.

THE
COUNTER
TO THAT
KODACHI IS
FINALLY
BECOMING
CLEAR...

BESIDES
...

YOU
SHOULD BE
CAREFUL
WHAT YOU
BRAG
ABOUT.

A
BLUFF...

TM



...HOW
YOU
PLAN
TO DO
IT.

NOT
UNLESS
YOU CAN
SHOW
ME...





THE SECRET OF
YOUR STRENGTH
IS HOW COMPLETELY
YOU CONTROL YOUR
OPPONENT'S RANGE.

AOSHI.

IT'S THE
DISTANCE IN
WHICH YOU
CAN ATTACK
IN ONE
MOVEMENT.

OKAY,
YAHIKO.
ABOUT
RANGE...

RANGE...

SO?!

KNH.

ZFZF

BETWEEN THE MOST
SKILLED OF
FIGHTERS, VICTORY
USUALLY COMES
DOWN TO HOW WELL
YOU KEEP YOUR
OPPONENT OUT OF
YOUR ZONE, AND
STAY WITHIN
YOUR OWN.

IF
SO, SHUT
UP.

THE RANGE
VARIES WITH
EACH INDIVIDUAL'S
WEAPON AND
SKILL.

YOU
WANNA
LEARN OR
NOT?

YOU
USE KODACHI
AGAINST KATANA
WITHIN THIS
ONE'S BLIND
SPOT, THEN
ATTACK WITH
YOUR FIST.

BUT IF
THE RANGE
OF THE KATANA
IS ALTERED TO
THAT OF THE
KODACHI...

AT FIRST
GLANCE,
IT WOULD
SEEM THE
ONE WITH
THE KATANA
HOLDS THE
ADVANTAGE.

BUT
LONGER
RANGES ALSO
HAVE MORE
BLIND
SPOTS.

I HAVE
SEEN...THE
TRUE
ESSENCE
OF THE
HITOKIRI.

BREAK
THE BONE...
BY LETTING
THE FLESH
BE CUT...
IS IT?

SWAY...

....
...SHRINKS.

...THE
BLIND
SPOT
NATURALLY
...

IF YOU SIMPLY
GRASP IT,
ESPECIALLY
AT THE BASE
WHERE IT'S
MOST DULL,
IT WON'T
DIG INTO
THE BONE.

MM. THE
KATANA SHOWS
ITS SHARPNESS
BY PUSHING
OR PULLING
AGAINST THE
TARGET.

I WILL
ALLOW YOU
TO SEE THE
ESSENCE OF THE
ONIWABANSHU
OKASHIRA.

AS A
GIFT IN
RETURN...



WAF





**SWORD-
DANCE
?!**

**THIS
IS...**

**SHINOMORI
AOSHI'S
TRUE
FIGHTING
STYLE....!!**

SWAY

**DON'T BOTHER.
YOU, SO USED TO
SWORD-FIGHTING
IN WHICH
STILLNESS AND
MOVEMENT ARE
CLEAR AS NIGHT
AND DAY..**

**THOUGH
NOT
RITUAL
DANCE...**

SWAY

**...YOU
WILL NEVER
"GET" MY
FLOWING
MOVEMENT.**

SWAY

**...BUT COMBAT
SWORD-DANCE,
COMBINING
YOUR KODACHI
SKILL AND
MARTIAL-ARTS
MOVEMENT!**

**KIK
KIK
KIK**

READ
THIS
WAY

DIE.

SWAY



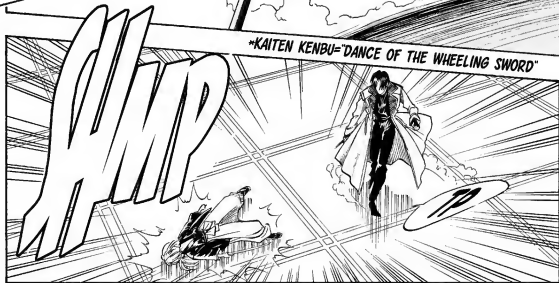


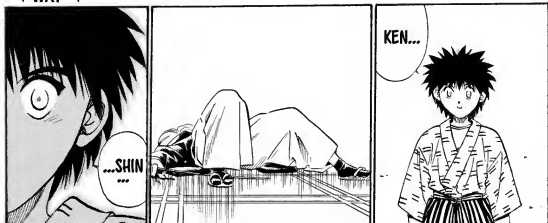
**KENSHIN
!!**

"KAITEN
KENBU"..."

USED TO
FINISH ALL
WHO WOULD
INTRUDE
UPON EDO
CASTLE.

*KAITEN KENBU="DANCE OF THE WHEELING SWORD"





NO
WAY HE...
DIES
HERE.

GNG
GNG
GNG...

YAHIKO
IS...AN
IMPORTANT
PART OF KAMIYA
KASSHIN-
RYU...



AFRAID
NOT.

OR
THIS ONE
EITHER,
FOR THAT
MATTER.

GNG...

KENSHIN!

ARE YOU
IMMORTAL,
OR...?!

W
O
B
B
L
E



READ
THIS
WAY

I SEE...SO YOU
PULLED IN THE
SCABBARD, TAKING
ONLY HALF-
DAMAGE.

IT CUT
THROUGH
THE METAL
SHEATH
LIKE
WOOD.

YOUR
"KAITEN
KENBU"
...

KEE-RANK



I ACKNOWLEDGE
IT...FROM THE
DEPTHS OF MY
HEART.

QUITE A MAN.
THERE'S A
REASON YOU'RE
CALLED MOST
POWERFUL.

BUT
NOW...

NOW IS
WHEN I
MAKE
THAT
TITLE
OURS!!

JAB!





◀ READ
THIS
WAY ▶

IT'S OVER,
HIMURA
BATTŌSAI!!

HAH!

KANG

KENSHIN
!!!





YOUR
MOVEMENT
MAY BE
"BEYOND,"
IT'S TRUE...

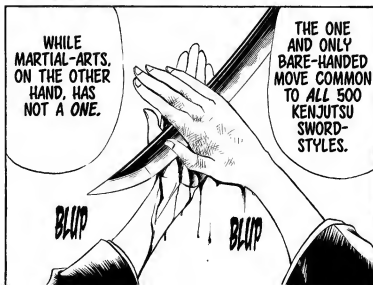


BUT THE
MOMENT YOU
ATTACK FROM
YOUR SWORD-
DANCE, IT'S
A DIFFERENT
STORY.



WHILE
MARTIAL-ARTS,
ON THE OTHER
HAND, HAS
NOT A ONE.

THE ONE
AND ONLY
BARE-HANDED
MOVE COMMON
TO ALL 500
KENJUTSU
SWORD-
STYLES.



IT'S JUST
ONE MORE
BURDEN TO
CARRY.

AOSHI, IF YOU
WANT THE TITLE
"MOST POWERFUL"
SO MUCH,
HAVE IT.

HUF

HUF

HUF

...ARE
THOSE WHO
ARE WAITING,
AND THOSE
WHO NEED...

GB

...THE
ONLY
THINGS
THAT
MATTER...

FOR
THIS
ONE...

...THIS
ONE'S
HELP!

!!

W

Act 28

Battle's End





H...
HUK...

EVEN
YOU CAN'T
TAKE TWO
BLOWS
TO THE
THROAT.

DON'T
FORCE
YOURSELF!
GET BACK!

CAN I...
LOSE?

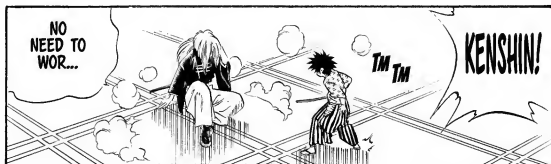
HF

HF

IT'S
NOT
OVER
!!

KENSHIN!!







NO...
BUT HE'S
OUT.

IS HE
DEAD...?



MEANING
EXTREME PAIN
AND
ASPHYXIATION.

...STILL HE
WANTED TO
HIT BACK...
SO HE TRIED
A DEEP
BREATH.

HIS THROAT
BADLY
DAMAGED
FROM TWO
HARD
HITS...



PAT

...DEFEAT
ACCEPTED
HIM.

...THOUGH
HIS
HEART NEVER
ACCEPTED
DEFEAT...

IN
THE
END...

...WHAT
YOU
SAID
THEN...

IT WAS VERY
COMFORTING.

WHEN
HIS KAITEN
KENBU HIT
FULL FORCE...

HEH

HEH
HEH
HEH!



A FINE
THOUGHT...
IF WE KNEW
WHERE SHE
WAS.

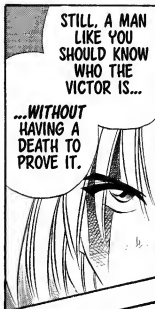
PERHAPS
IF AOSHI
WERE
AWAKE...

ALL RIGHT!
NOW ALL THAT'S
LEFT TO DO
IS BEAT UP
KANRYU AND
RESCUE
MEGUMI!

BRING IT ON!

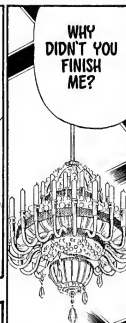


QUICK
RECOVERY.



STILL, A MAN
LIKE YOU
SHOULD KNOW
WHO THE
VICTOR IS...

...WITHOUT
HAVING A
DEATH TO
PROVE IT.



WHY
DIDN'T YOU
FINISH
ME?



.....



THIS
ONE IS
RUROUNI
NOW.

NOT
HITOKIRI.



I
MUST
HAVE
FALLEN...

WELL...
ONLY
FOR
ABOUT 10
SECONDS.

THOUGH
YOU'VE ALWAYS
BEEN OF THE
SHADOWS, YOU'VE
ALSO BEEN
OKASHIRA OF THE
ONIWABANSHU.

SURELY
YOU MUST
HAVE HAD
CHANCES TO
BECOME A
MILITARY
OFFICER.

AOSHI,
ANSWER
ONE
QUESTION.

IF YOU NEEDED
A PLACE TO PUT
YOUR STRENGTHS TO
USE, THERE MUST
HAVE BEEN OTHER
PLACES TO DO SO.

WHY ARE
YOU ACTING
LIKE SOME
HIRED
BODYGUARD?

FOR THE
REST OF
THE ONI-
WABANSHU,
NO
INVITATIONS
WERE OFFERED.

NOT TO
MENTION
HAN'NYA,
WITH HIS
TERRIBLE
FACE...

MEN STRONG IN
A SINGLE SKILL--
LIKE BESHIMI
OR HYOTTOKO--
OR MEN LIKE
SHIKIJO, WHO IS
A TRAITOR...

EVERY
OFFER,
THOUGH,
WAS
FOR ME
ALONE.

OF COURSE, PLENTY OF
THEM. I DON'T KNOW HOW
OR WHERE THEY HEARD
OF THE ONIWABANSHU,
BUT EVERYTHING FROM
ARMY INTELLIGENCE TO
LEADER PROTECTION'S
BEEN OFFERED.



HOW
COULD
I?

HOW
COULD I,
THE OKASHIRA,
ABANDON
MY OWN
MEN?



NO. I
WILL
NOT.

SHOULD I BE LIKE
YOSHINOBU, THE
LAST TOKUGAWA
SHOGUN WHO ENDED
AN AGE?



EVEN
SO...

TOKUGAWA
YOSHINOBU
...

I GET
IT--HIS
COMPLETE
SURRENDER.

STILL
I WILL
NOT.

IN THE END, IT
WAS A POLITICAL
DECISION, MEANT
TO SAVE THE
COUNTRY FROM
FURTHER
DESTRUCTIVE
CONFLICT.



UNTIL
ONLY
FOUR
WERE
LEFT.

ONE BY
ONE, I
WATCHED
THEM FIND
NEW WAYS
OF LIVING.

IT'S BEEN 10
YEARS SINCE
WE ONI-
WABANSHŪ
WERE THRUST
INTO THIS NEW
AGE, MEIJI,
AND THIS NEW
CAPITAL,
TOKYO...

OR ELSE,
IN THE
FUTURE,
I WILL
KEEP
COMING
AFTER
YOU.

FINISH
ME.

TO
LAY IT BY
THEIR SIDE.
TO GIVE
THEM
PRIDE.

I
WANTED THE
TITLE, "MOST
POWERFUL,"
FOR THEM...

THEY
LIVED TO
FIGHT, YET
WERE
BARRED
FROM IT.

SUCH
WERE THE
ONIWABANSHŪ
OF EDO
CASTLE.





BUT
BATTLES
INVOLVING
INNOCENTS
WILL
NOT BE
TOLERATED.

《 READ
THIS
WAY 》



KENSHIN!

THEN
COME, IF
YOU WILL.
UNTIL
YOU'RE
SATISFIED.



.....



HAH, HA HA!
SHINOMORI AOSHI,
ROLLING OVER
TO BEG, AFTER
BARKING SO
VERY LOUD!!

!





Gatling Gun

Together with the armored-ship *Stonewall Jackson* and the *Armstrong Gun*, it is one of the three great machines of war. Invented by an American doctor named *Gatling* in 1861, the Gatling gun served as the original model for the machine gun. After the Union Army saw astonishing success with this gun during the American Civil War, various models were built, and ultimately spread, throughout the world. In Japan, *Echigo Nagaoka* domain obtained it, and in the third (Northern) battle of the Boshin War, Minister *Kawal Tsugunosuke* operated it himself, posing a significant threat to the Imperial Army.

THE OLD
GUNS OF THE
BAKUMATSU
DON'T EVEN
COME CLOSE.

SHALL
WE GIVE
IT A
TRY?

SWOOP

BUT DO YOU
KNOW THAT
THIS IS A NEW
MODEL, SOLD
ON THE BLACK
MARKET, WHICH
EVEN THE
GOVERNMENT
HASN'T SEEN?!

OH, VERY
GOOD! YOU
KNOW YOUR
WEAPONS!



GATATATATATATATAT





◀ READ THIS WAY ▶

HAN'NYA!

DON'T BE SO SUSPICIOUS.

PAWIR!

SOMETHING'S HAPPENED UPSTAIRS.

WE'RE NOT ABOUT TO TURN COWARD AND BACKSTAB YOU NOW.

SHIKIJŌ AND I LOST IN FAIR FIGHTS.

NOT AT ALL.

WAKE UP, SHIKIJŌ.

...NOT ALL EVIL, ARE YOU?

YOU'RE ...

BESIDES, I'M WORRIED FOR AOSHI. I'M GOING WITH SHIKIJŌ. WHAT ABOUT YOU?

MMM...

WAS THAT SARCASTIC JUST NOW?

HMPH.



THE
MORE
THINGS
CHANGE...

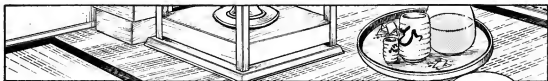
FEH...

TCH



YOUR
FACE IS
GOOD FOR
WAKING
PEOPLE
UP.

AH...
HAN NYA.



HEY,
SHORTY.

WHAT,
FATSO?



I
GUESS
THIS IS
NO TIME
TO BE
NAPPING.



...THEN
I'M NOT
IMAGINING
IT.

IF
FATSO
HEARD
IT, TOO...



DID YOU
HEAR
THAT
ROAR?

[illegible][illegible]

KANRYŪ.

HOW DID YOU GET SUCH A WEAPON?!

IF YOU STOP, I'LL HIT YOU!!

RUN FAST!



IF YOU STOP, I'LL HIT YOU!!

RUN FAST!



THERE
MAY
BE ONE
CHANCE...

...BUT FOR
NOW, WE
CAN'T DO
MUCH BUT
RUN.



THERE
MAY
BE ONE
CHANCE...

...BUT FOR
NOW, WE
CAN'T DO
MUCH BUT
RUN.

THAT JERK!
HE'S MISSING
ON PURPOSE,
JUST TO
WATCH US
SQUIRM! CAN'T
YOU DO
ANYTHING?!



THAT'S
KANRYŪ
SIR, YOU
IMPUDENT
FOOL!

!!

AOSHI!

I'LL
THINK
ABOUT
ANSWERING...
AFTER A
BREAK.

OF
ALL
THE...

STR



A
"MERCHANT
OF DEATH."
AN ARMS
DEALER.



YOU
MEAN
...

NNG
NNG...



MY GOAL'S
ALWAYS BEEN
TO MOVE ON
UP TO THE
BIG TIME.

I'VE NO INTENTION
OF ENDING MY
LIFE AS SOME
PETTY, SMALL-TIME
OPIUM DEALER.



THIS IS
THE STORY OF
THE GREAT
MERCHANT
TAKEDA
KANRYU,
TOLD!

...LEADING
WITH THIS
NEW-MODEL
GATLING GUN,
ENTERING THE
FIELD WITH
A BANG!

AMASSING
CAPITAL
WITH THE
NEW
OPIUM...



I DON'T
EXPECT THE
LIKES OF
YOU TO
UNDERSTAND.

PFFF



AND
YOU'RE
WILLING...

...TO USE
PEOPLE'S
LIVES AND
HAPPINESS
FOR YOUR
OWN
FORTUNE?



IT
MUST NOT
HAVE BEEN
AN EASY
TASK.

HIMURA
BATTOSAI, HOW
MANY YEARS DID
IT TAKE FOR YOU
TO ACHIEVE THOSE
SUPERIOR
SKILLS?

**ALL
AT
ONCE!**

**WITHOUT
HAVING TO
GIVE UP
ANYTHING!**

**BUT WITH
MONEY...I
CAN EASILY
BUY POWER
TO DWARF
YOURS!!**

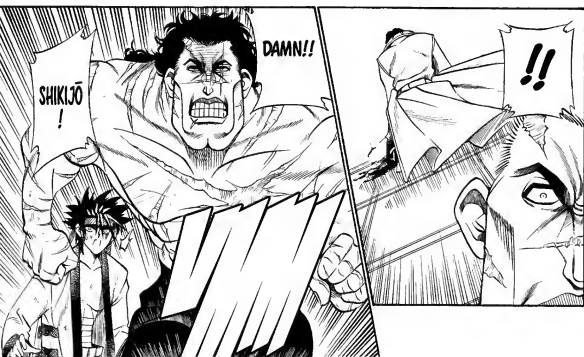
**THAT IS
THE SOURCE
OF TRUE
POWER!**

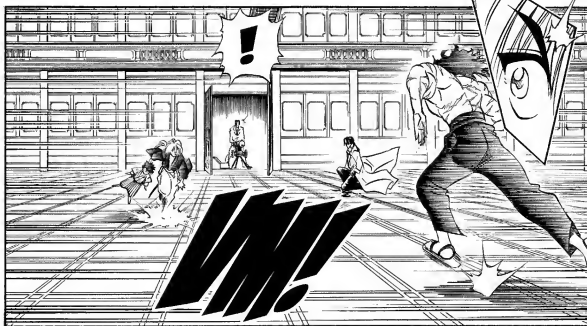
MONEY!!

CHUANK

**IN THE
END, THE
"MOST
POWERFUL"...
IS ME!**

DIE!!









NOT EVEN
BULLETS
CAN...GET
THROUGH TO...
SHOWED
HIM...

I GOT NO
COMPLAINTS.
LOOK AT THESE
MUSCLES...WHAT
ELSE COULD
I WANT?

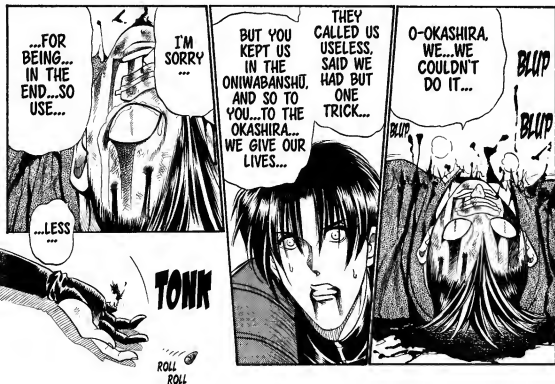


WHOA,
HEY...DON'T
YOU START
SQUIRTING
NOW.

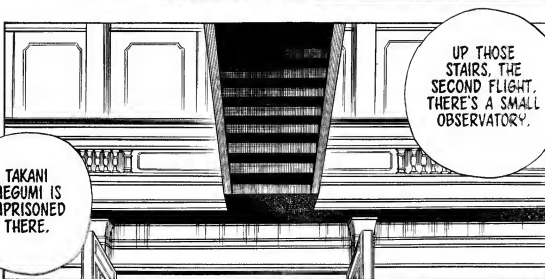
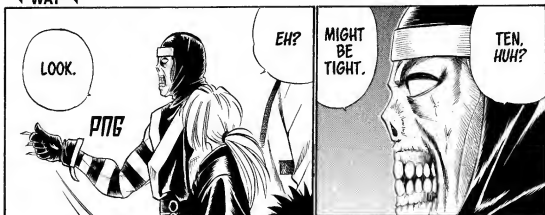
SHIKI...





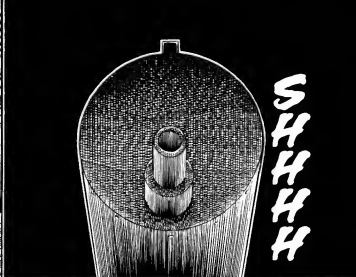
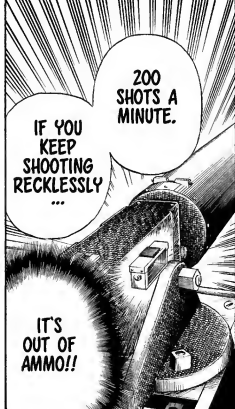


















The Secret Life of Characters (12)

—Takeda Kanryū—

Just as they did with Sanosuke, Shinsengumi fans will recognize right off that Kanryū is based on the captain of the 5th unit of the Shinsengumi, Takeda Kanryūsai. A man who studied *Kōshū-ryū* war theory, Takeda Kanryūsai was a rare Shinsengumi intellectual. His personality, though, was bad—kissing up to superiors, being mean and sneaky to subordinates. Basically, he was jumping on the Shinsengumi bandwagon, and once the outlook started to turn grim, he tried to defect to Satsuma Prefecture but was found out. He was disciplined...and that was the end of him. The main characters of Shinsengumi novels are almost always the same gang of four: Serizawa Kamo, Yamanami Keisuke, Itō Kashitarō, Takeda Kanryūsai. The first three had their own beliefs and ways of life to provide narrative conflict, but as the “sincere fool,” Takeda Kanryūsai had his own narrative value, and so I used him as a model here. I found myself putting so much emphasis on Megumi and the Oniwabanshū, though, that Takeda Kanryū never became the character I wanted him to be. That for me was a bit of a letdown.

Purely as a sidenote, the historical Kanryūsai Takeda is well-known as having been gay, and so of course I thought about that for my own Takeda. On top of it being irrelevant to the plot, though, it was thought that it might unnecessarily complicate things, and so it was dropped. I do wonder sometimes how the story might have gone, had we done it that way.

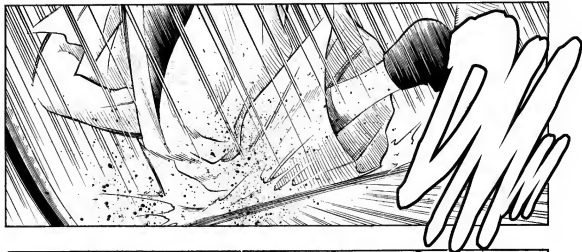
There is no real model in terms of design. Takeda Kanryū is a carry-over from Nishiwaki in the stand-alone *Rurouni* episodes, and wears white if only because, between Kenshin and Aoshi, there was too much black already. And that's all I have to say about that.



Act 29
Dual
Conclusions:
Megumi

仲伸
月宏







BUT THE
WOUND YOU
RECEIVED
IN THIS
BATTLE
IS MUCH
GREATER.



YOU'RE
QUITE A
MAN TO BE
ABLE TO
WOUND
KENSIN SO
BADLY.



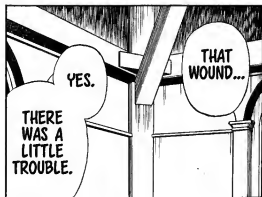
SHINOMORI
AOSHI.



THE
GUNSHOTS...
STOPPED.

NOW
WHAT...?







◀ READ THIS WAY ▶

! MEGUMI-DONO!!

...WILL
END
WITH
ME.

SOON,
YOUR
WORRIES
...

IF NOTHING
ELSE, I
GOT TO MEET
ALL OF
YOU.

LOOK
WHAT I'VE
BECOME.

MAKING
OPIUM. LIVING
SELFISHLY, SO
DESPERATE
TO SEE
FAMILY.

YES.

GRIP

NO!

UGH





Here's something I've noticed. I've been getting comments in letters lately along the lines, "I love the Shinsengumi, too! I hate the Ishin Shishi." Or, "I can't believe you like the Shinsengumi. What are you, an anti-shōgunate dog?" People, in other words, who acknowledge only one side of the conflict. This is a shame, if you ask Watsuki. One of the most interesting things about the Bakumatsu is that there were 100 different factions fighting for 100 different causes. They lived according to their own beliefs, not by some "this side not that side" mentality. Watsuki's personal favorite may be the Shinsengumi's Hijikata Toshizō, but his second favorite is (pro-Imperialist) Ōkubo Toshimichi. To those of you who've discovered an interest in the Meiji Restoration because of "Rurōken," keep reading! Keep enjoying! Remember, there wouldn't have been a revolution without the Imperialists and the Shōgunists. See you next volume!

Watsuki





IT'S THE
POLICE!!

THIS
IS BAD,
KENSIN!

HEY!

GO!
GO!

GOT
IN!

HEY!

PHEEE

C'MON!

LET'S
GO!

WE
GOTTA
GET
OUT OF
HERE!!

.....
THEY MUST
HAVE HEARD
THE RACKET!!



KEN-
SAN...

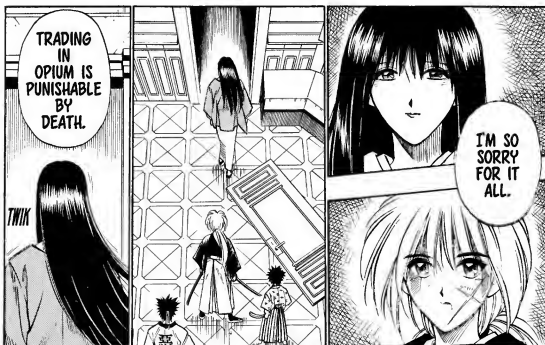


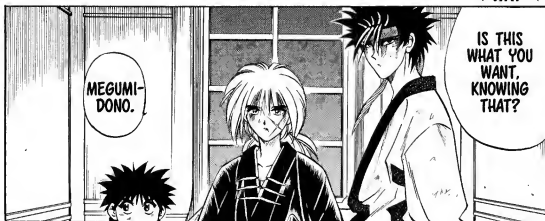
WHAT
TH--
STEP



DON'T
JUST STAND
THERE, COME
ON! HURRY!!

JERK





MEGUMI-
DONO.

IS THIS
WHAT YOU
WANT,
KNOWING
THAT?



THERE'S
NO RUNNING
FROM THAT.

PEOPLE
HAVE DIED,
LIKE SANOSUKE'S
FRIEND,
BECAUSE OF
MY OPIUM.

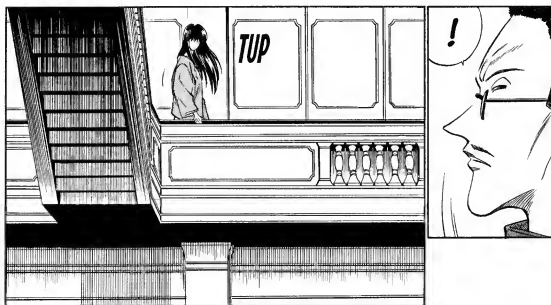
...YES.



...WITH
MY
OWN
LIFE.

THE
LIVES I'VE
TAKEN
WILL BE
PAID FOR...

TUP
TUP
TUP



READ
THIS
WAY

WHO
ARE
YOU?

THAT'S
HER! THE
MAKER
OF THE
NEW OPIUM!

MY
PARTNER
IN
CRIME!

I'M
TAKING
YOU WITH
ME TO THE
BOTTOM
OF HELL!!

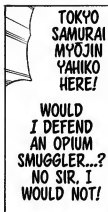
NO ESCAPE
FOR YOU,
MEGUMI!
WHATEVER
YOU SAY,
YOU'RE STILL
THE ONE
WHO MADE
IT!

HYAAAAA HAAAA

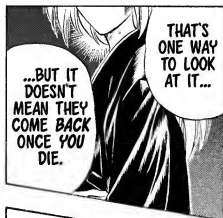
.....
IT...

IS
THIS
TRUE?









...BUT IT
DOESN'T
MEAN THEY
COME BACK
ONCE YOU
DIE.

THAT'S
ONE WAY
TO LOOK
AT IT...



"THE LIVES
I'VE TAKEN
WILL BE
PAID FOR
WITH MY
OWN LIFE."



...BY
REDEEMING
YET OTHER
LIVES.

LIVES
CAN
ALSO BE
PAID FOR
BY THE
SWORD...



KEN-
SAN...

WHY
DID
YOU...?



THAT
IS WHY
"HITOKIRI
BATTŌSAI"...

...IS
STILL ALIVE
IN THE
MEIJI ERA.

AND MEDICINE
LIKE THIS CAN
SAVE EVEN MORE
THAN BATTOSAI'S
SWORD.



HITOKIRI
BATTOSAI
...!



BECOME
A DOCTOR,
MEGUMI-
DONO.



THE...
LEGENDARY
...?

HELP
THOSE SUFFERING
NOT JUST FROM
OPIUM, BUT FROM
ALL PAINS AND
ILLS.

KOP



EEK!

BETCHA
RUN INTO
YOUR FAMILY
THAT WAY,
TOO!

FFWAP



...FOR MY
FRIEND.

IF YOU
DO...I'LL
FORGIVE
YOU...







The Secret Life of Characters (13)

—Takani Megumi—

There's no real model, but when creating her I imagined a mature woman. Some of you were no doubt surprised to see how different she turned out here as compared to the stand-alone episodes (Volume 3) but, for me, they both spring from the same spirit and therefore aren't really that unlike.

The stand-alone Megumi did have a lighter quality to begin with, but that was because she didn't have as much to do. Once I realized that she would also appear in this series, I knew she had to make more of an impression and I therefore gave her a more earthy quality. It was my first time with this kind of character, though, and so there was a lot to learn. Looking back now, she isn't nearly what I'd wanted, and that's a bit disappointing. Still, the heart of the drama flows from her deepest inner spirit, and so I suppose that's to be expected.

Megumi was entertaining to draw—and is the one character who can talk “female-to-female” with Kaoru—so I plan to have her appear frequently as a secondary character. She also has the convenience of being a doctor. According to reader mail, two main opinions prevail: (1) “Megumi and Aoshi are suited for each other,” and (2) “Megumi and Sano are suited for each other.” Watsuki wonders if, in the case of the former, the “suited” part is meant intellectually, while the latter “suited” may be meant temperamentally. Just as with Kenshin and Kaoru, though, at this point I have no such plans for her future. The Megumi arc has “redemption for her crimes” as its theme, and I wanted to express through Megumi Kenshin's determination. (This second part, though, was really tough to pull off.) To write about Kenshin's redemption for his own crimes...thinking of that, I get a headache.

The model in terms of design is the young grandma appearing in Obata-sensei's “Cyborg Ji-chan ‘G’ (Cyborg Grandpa ‘G’).” That manga's given me ideas for a long time but, obviously, I can't draw as well as the sensei, and now his character has turned into my own rather lame Megumi. Sigh....





Act 30

**Dual Conclusions:
Aoshi**



AOSHI...

...HE'S
GONE
!!?

HHH?





NO ONE COULD
HAVE COME IN
OR OUT OF
THE MANSION
WITHOUT BEING
NOTICED. THE
GROUNDS,
EITHER.

REOLICH

DON'T BE
FOOLISH.
EVERY LAST
EXIT IS UNDER
GUARD BY
THE POLICE!

ARE YOU
SURE YOU
DON'T
NEED NEW
GLASSES?!



...DISAPPEAR
INTO
SMOKE?

THEN DID HE
REALLY...
LIKE AN
ONMITSU...

MAYBE
YOU DIDN'T
LOOK
CLOSE
ENOUGH.

THERE'S
ANOTHER EXIT
NO ONE'S
MENTIONING.

NO
SUCH
THING.

OH!

IN THE FEW
MOMENTS
BETWEEN THE
TIME KEN-SAN
AND THE OTHERS
CAME TO THE
OBSERVATORY,
AND THE POLICE
RAIDED THE
MANSION...

...HE ESCAPED
USING THE
PASSAGE
THROUGH
THE ATTIC!

KANRYŪ'S
SECRET
PASSAGE
!!

IT GOES DOWN
INSIDE THE
WALLS FROM THE
ATTIC, TO THE
FOREST BEHIND
THE HOUSE.
FOLLOW
ME!

THIS
EXIT,
WHERE
...?!

D-D-D-D-D

AOSHI...!

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

THE
DOOR'S
OPEN.

HE DID
COME
THROUGH
HERE...



STOP
EVEN A
KITTEN
GOING
PAST!

YADA

YADA

SEARCH!
HE MUST
STILL BE
CLOSE BY!







NOT SO FAST.
YOU'LL ALL
JUST BE
KILLED.





IT'S
NOT
YOUR
FAULT.

THAT
GATLING GUN--
WHAT COULD
YOU HAVE
DONE?



BUT THEY
WERE HAPPY
TO DO IT.

THE
ONIWABANSHŪ
DIED TO
LET YOU
LIVE.



AOSHI.

.....

READ
THIS
WAY



IF YOU
REALLY
CANNOT
FORGIVE
YOURSELF...

LET US
FIGHT,
ONE MORE
TIME.



TAKE THE
WORDS,
"MOST
POWERFUL"...
FOR THOSE
FOUR'S GRAVES.



FIGHT...
AND
THEN
WIN.



BATTŌSAI.





AFTER
HIM!
NOW!!

DM



PFF

TM



KENSHIN...

HEY
STOP

HEY

UNTIL
I COME
KILL
YOU...

...DON'T
LET ANYONE
BEAT ME
TO IT.

NO
POINT
WORRYING
ABOUT
IT.

SO HE
GOES.



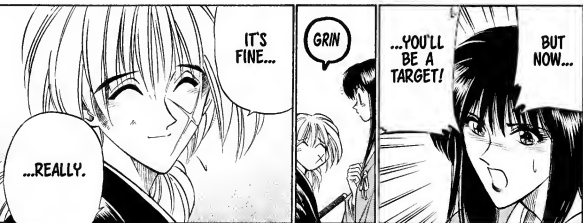
IT'S
FINE...

GRIN

...YOU'LL
BE A
TARGET!

BUT
NOW...

...REALLY.



LET'S
GO
HOME.

THIS
TIME FOR
REAL.

SO.



BREAK-
FAST
AND
BATHS
ARE ALL
READY!

WELL,
WHATEVER
THE
REASON...
GOOD
WORK!

YOU GUYS...
SO MANY
INJURIES...

YOU
ALL
NIGHT
?

SEEMS
YOU'VE A FEW
YOURSELF,
KAORU-
DONO...

ENJOY!

WE'RE
HOME!







...FOR YOUR
HOSPITALITY.

THANK
YOU...

ALSO...



HEH
HEH

AN
ASSISTANT
LIKE MEGUMI
IS ALWAYS
WELCOME.

HEH HEH



...ESPECIALLY
SINCE
SOMEONE
STILL EATS
FOR FREE.

I WISH IT WEREN'T
SO SMALL HERE,
OR THAT THERE
WAS SO LITTLE
FOOD...



ORO?

UM...
KEN-SAN?

SOMEBODY
CALL THE
DOCTOR...

YOU
ARE
THE
DOCTOR...

NO, PLEASE!
THANK YOU
FOR FINDING
ME THE
LIVE-IN
JOB...



I BET
I CAN
KEEP YOU...
ENTERTAINED.

CALL ME
WHEN YOU'RE
BORED WITH
KAORU-CHAN.

READ
THIS
WAY

SHE'S
KINDA
SIMPLE.
NOT MUCH
FOR
JOKES.

LOOK.
I TOLD
YOU.

"ENTER-
TAINED"...
HOW?

I'M SO
BAD.

GRRRRRR!

ARE YOU
GONE YET,
YOU VIXEN
??!

YOU
SELLING
ME A
FIGHT?

☆ HEH
HEH ☆

AND IF I
WERE WITH
YOU, IT
WOULD BE
A JOKE.

HEH

SILLY. IT'S
FAR TOO LATE
AT 22 TO
START CHANGING
ONE'S WICKED
WAYS.

GUESS
NOT.

FEH. I
THOUGHT YOU'D
STRAIGHTENED
UP A LITTLE
WITH ALL
THIS.

TCH

OH,
BUT...

NEITHER
AM I.



TCH

IT'S ALL SOUNDING SO FAMILIAR...

"ENTERTAIN"?
HOW
"ENTERTAIN."



...AT LEAST IT'S ALL SETTLED.

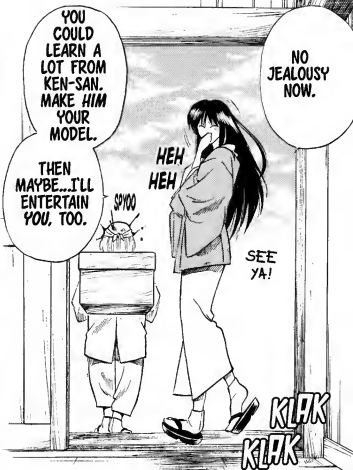
AARGH!!

WELL, IN ANY EVENT...

SHUT UP ALREADY.

NO VIXENS ALLOWED!!

AND DON'T COME BACK!!



YOU COULD LEARN A LOT FROM KEN-SAN. MAKE HIM YOUR MODEL.

THEN MAYBE...I'LL ENTERTAIN YOU, TOO.

HEH HEH

NO JEALOUSY NOW.

SEE YA!

KLOK KLOK



...YOU GAVE AOSHI A REASON TO LIVE.

SO BY MAKING YOUR LIFE HIS TARGET...



FOR MEGUMI-DONO, PERHAPS.



YES...
AND HE'LL
STAY THAT
WAY FOR
A WHILE.

NOT TO
MENTION ESCAPE
PURSUIT OF
THE POLICE,
AND GO INTO
HIDING.

UNTIL HE'S
CONFIDENT
THIS ONE
CAN BE
DEFEATED.

HE'LL
HEAL HIS
WOUNDS,
RETRAIN
HIMSELF...

HOPEFULLY
NOT.

IN THE
MEAN-
TIME...

KENSHIN
NEVER
LOSES!

YEAH,
RIGHT!

GNG

BEFORE
MEGUMI-
DONO,
THERE
WAS NO
FEAR.

BUT
WHAT
OF THE
NEXT
TIME...?



...WOULD
THAT EVEN
SHINOMORI
AOSHI
FINDS A
PLACE IN
THIS WORLD
FOR HOPE.





HEY?!
DO YOU
HEAR
ME?!

HEY
....!!!



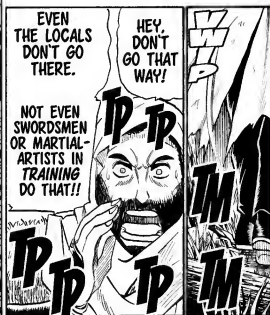
BUT,
ONE
DAY...

I
WILL.



...ALONE
DEEP
IN THE
MOUNTAINS
?

HEY,
WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING...



EVEN
THE LOCALS
DON'T GO
THERE.

HEY,
DON'T
GO THAT
WAY!

NOT EVEN
SWORDSMEN
OR MARTIAL-
ARTISTS IN
TRAINING
DO THAT!!

TP-TP

TP

TP

TP

TM

TM

The Secret Life of Characters (14)

—Okashira • Shinomori Aoshi—

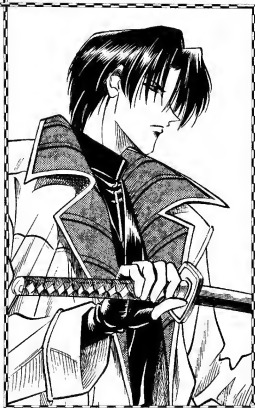
As mentioned previously in regard to Beshimi, the Oniwabanshū were tacked on at the last minute, and so when it was time for Aoshi to appear, I hadn't really worked out a concrete image and therefore had some trouble writing him. With time, though, the models for the Oniwabanshū became my favorite Shinsengumi, and Aoshi's model became the Assistant Chief of the Shinsengumi, Hijikata Toshizō. Even citing Hijikata as a reference, though, there's still two versions of him in the novels (you Shinsengumi hardcores know what I'm talking about).

One Hijikata is the one from "*Moeyo Ken* (Burn, O Sword)," a bundle of raw combat-instinct who keeps fighting until the very death (it's this Hijikata that Watsuki is a fan of). The other Hijikata is the one who hides his selfishness for the sake of the Shinsengumi, acting mercilessly but crying inside. (That's the one Aoshi has as his model.) "The Shinsengumi who could not fight..." In other words, they couldn't show their beliefs, honor, or abilities to the outside world, and so were labeled the defeated. The Asst. Chief who fought to keep his Oniwabanshū from hiding their lights beneath a bushel, that's Aoshi. I won't reveal here whether or not Aoshi will become an ogre-like warrior who fights to the death, but his reappearance isn't that far away.

There's no specific design-model for him. I first used a character I have in my sketchbook, but as the story went on, the image of Hijikata became stronger and stronger, causing me to add the bangs. When editing the (compiled) manga, I had the chance to change it, but that might seem kind of strange, so I let it be—I wouldn't want anyone to think Aoshi was wearing a rug or anything.



Rurouni Kenshin



GLOSSARY of the RESTORATION

A brief guide to select Japanese terms used in *Rurouni Kenshin*. Note that, both here and within the story itself, all names are Japanese style—i.e., last or “family” name first, with personal or “given” name following. This is both because *Kenshin* is a “period” story, as well as to decrease confusion—were we to take the example of *Kenshin*’s sakabatô and “reverse” the format of the historically established assassin-name “Hitokiri Battôsei,” for example, it would make little sense to then call him “Battôsei Himura.”

hitokiri

An assassin. Famous swordsmen of the period were sometimes thus known to adopt “professional” names—*Kawakami Gensai*, for example, was also known as “Hitokiri Gensai”

Ishin Shishi

Loyalist or pro-Imperialist *patriots* who fought to restore the Emperor to his ancient seat of power

Jôdan, Chûdan (Seigan), Gedan, Hassô,

Wakigamae

The five basic postures or “stances (*kamae*)” of *kendô*. **Jôdan**: Sword lifted overhead. **Chûdan** (Seigan): Cut to middle level. **Gedan**: Low-level, downward/sweeping block. **Hassô**: Sword held vertically, hands shoulder-level. **Wakigamae**: Horizontal (guard) position. In this story, Han’nya uses *Shinken*, a variant of *Seigan*, as noted (correctly) by Yahiko

Kamiya Kasshin-ryû

Sword-arts or *kenjutsu* school established by Kaoru’s father, who rejected the ethics of *Satsujin-ken* for *Katsujin-ken*

katana

Traditional Japanese longsword (curved, single-edge, worn cutting-edge up) of the samurai. Used primarily for slashing; can be wielded either one- or two-handed

Katsujin-ken

“Swords that give life”; the sword-arts style developed over ten years by Kaoru’s father and founding principle of *Kamiya Kasshin-ryû*

Katsu Kaishû

Founder of the Japanese navy. Described famously as “the greatest man in Japan,” Katsu Kaishû was born the only son of an impoverished petty samurai in Edo in January 1823, and would one day become the most powerful man in the Tokugawa Shôgunate

Bakumatsu

Final, chaotic days of the Tokugawa regime

bokutô

Kendô (“sword-arts”) weapon made of wood; also known as a “*bokken*”

-chan

Honorific. Can be used either as a diminutive (e.g., with a small child—“Little Hanako or Kentarô”), or with those who are grown, to indicate affection (“My dear...”)

dojo

Martial arts training hall

-dono

Honorific. Even more respectful than *-san*, the effect in modern-day Japanese conversation would be along the lines of “Milord So-and-So.” As used by *Kenshin*, it indicates both respect and humility

Edo

Capital city of the *Tokugawa Bakufu*, renamed *Tokyo* (“Eastern Capital”) after the Meiji Restoration

Himura Battôsei

Swordsmen of legendary skills and former assassin (*hitokiri*) of the *Ishin Shishi*

Himura Kenshin

Kenshin’s “real” name, revealed to Kaoru only at her urging

Hiten Mitsurugi-ryû

Kenshin’s sword technique, used more for defense than offense. An “ancient style that pits one against many,” it requires exceptional speed and agility to master

rurouni

Wanderer, vagabond

Saigō Takamori

Commander of an Imperial Army 50,000 strong, at one time Saigō Takamori was the most powerful man in Japan. Described as a "quintessential samurai who cherished the words 'Love mankind, revere heaven,'" Saigō would eventually become a leader of disgruntled samurai opposing the rapid modernization of Japan (on which they blamed the demise of their own class)

sakabatō

Reversed-edge sword (the dull edge on the side the sharp should be, and vice-versa); carried by Kenshin as a symbol of his resolution never to kill again

-san

Honorific. Carries the meaning of "Mr.," "Ms.," "Miss," etc., but used more extensively in Japanese than its English equivalent (note that even an enemy may be addressed as "-san")

Satsujin-ken

"Swords that give death"; a style of swordsmanship rejected by Kaoru's father

shōgun

Feudal military ruler of Japan

shōgunate

See ***Tokugawa Bakufu***

Tokugawa Bakufu

Military feudal government which dominated Japan from 1603 to 1867

Tokyo

The renaming of "***Edo***" to "***Tokyo***" is a marker of the start of the ***Meiji Restoration***

wakizashi

Similar to the more familiar ***katana***, but shorter (blade between 12 and 24 inches)

Kawakami Gensai

Real-life, historical inspiration for the character of ***Himura Kenshin***

kenjutsu

The art of fencing; sword arts; kendō

-kun

Honorific. Used in the modern day among male students, or those who grew up together, but another usage—the one you're more likely to find in ***Rurouni Kenshin***—is the "superior-to-inferior" form, intended as a way to emphasize a difference in status or rank, as well as to indicate familiarity or affection

kodachi

Medium-length sword, shorter than the ***katana*** but longer than the ***wakizashi***. Its easy maneuverability also makes for higher defensive capability

loyalists

Those who supported the return of the Emperor to power; ***Ishin Shishi***

Meiji Restoration

1853-1868; culminated in the collapse of the ***Tokugawa Bakufu*** and the restoration of imperial rule. So called after Emperor Meiji, whose chosen name was written with the characters for "culture and enlightenment"

Okashira

Literally, "the head"; i.e., leader, boss

Oniwabanshū

Elite group of ***onmitsu*** or "spies" of the ***Edo*** period. Note that while Watsuki acknowledges the "Oniwabanshū ***onmitsu***" to be his own fictional creation, the Oniwabanshū do in fact seem to have a historical correlative as an information-gathering group, serving under the ***shōgun***, who continued up until the ***Bakumatsu*** to conduct their investigations all over the country

onmitsu

Spies. Also known as "***shinobi***," or of course the more familiar "***ninja***"

patriots

Another term for ***Ishin Shishi***...and when used by Sano, not a flattering one



IN THE NEXT VOLUME...

Yahiko's recent truancy at practice sessions is bothering Kenshin and Kaoru. When it's uncovered that Yahiko has been working part-time at a local eatery, Kenshin knows that something must be up. Eager to prove himself as a warrior, Yahiko attempts to save a troubled waitress from a gang of unruly *yakuza*. Kenshin and company offer their assistance, but Yahiko wants to fight the gang alone. Later, a trip to a neighboring school ends in disaster when Raijûta Isurugi, a fighter of incredible strength and speed, defeats the school's master, a close friend of Kaoru. Wishing to show the futile state of Meiji-era swordsmanship, Raijûta challenges Kenshin to a duel. Will Kenshin's antiquated style of fighting be his downfall?

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